

'Stop using classrooms as evacuation centers'

Classrooms should not be converted into evacuation centers during a disaster.

A senior Bicolano member of the House of Representatives has called on the national government to stop the practice of converting classrooms into evacuation centers when a disaster strikes, as both teachers and students always suffer in the process.

"There is a need to build temporary living quarters (TLQs) for our evacuees in the short term and not temporary

learning spaces for our pupils and teachers," *Ako Bicol* party-list Rep. Rodel Batocabe proposed in his privilege speech last Monday night.

Students and teachers should not be driven away from their classrooms to makeshift classrooms because this practice has been proven to be costly for Filipino taxpayers.

Batocabe, president of the Party-list Coalition at the House of Representatives, lamented that the practice of using classrooms for calamity

victims creates a new group of evacuees, which include students and teachers, instead of constructing TLQs for victims of calamities.

Classrooms are not designed to address the concerns of evacuees who are facing overcrowding, poor lighting and ventilation, and scarcity of water supply and toilet facilities, among many other problems, according to Batocabe.

"Evacuees were already driven away from their homes. Should students and teachers

also be driven away from their classrooms? Stop it," he said, noting that TLQs are usually wasted after students and teachers return to their classrooms.

"Let's build permanent evacuation centers because whether we like it or not, we will always be victims of typhoons and the most unpredictable of all, volcanic eruptions," Batocabe said, referring to the ongoing activity of Mayon Volcano in Legazpi City, Albay.

- Delon Porcalla

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